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ABSTRACT

This report examines twenty-three schools in their first year of participation in a California-State-sponsored restructuring initiative called Every Student Succeeds (ESS). Four areas of restructuring are reviewed: (1) curriculum and instruction; (2) governance; (3) professional development of teachers; and (4) coordination of community resources. In general, schools had gone the farthest in implementing their restructuring plans in the area of curriculum and instruction. Many schools were actively involved in enhancing their curriculum to make it more practical, with "real world" applications, and several were experimenting with integrated thematic units and projects. Heterogeneous grouping practices were explored as a way to improve student access to this enhanced curriculum. In the area of governance, many schools were changing traditional decision-making structures by decentralizing into smaller units called "families," and some were establishing schoolwide governance and management teams. Integral to the restructuring process was developing the professional skills of teachers. However, most of these efforts centered on traditional areas of staff training, not on those skills which would help teachers assume new roles and expanded responsibilities such as training in managerial, decision-making, and social service counseling skills. Coordination with outside community resources was an area of restructuring which was the least developed. Implications of this research include how to better integrate limited-English-proficient and other special needs children into schoolwide restructuring activities, how to develop standards of performance which are not differentiated by ability level, and how to develop systems of accountability that allow schools and districts some level of flexibility in the way success is defined. (Author)

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Restructuring Schools for Students at Risk

Early Experiences

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Restructuring Schools for Students at Risk

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STUDENTS AT RISK PROGRAM

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The Students At Risk Program at Far West Laboratory is one of four field services programs designed to serve the region comprised of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. The program focuses on improving the educational opportunities of students who are least likely to attain their full educational potential.

School districts, universities, state departments of education, and other agencies use our resources, technical assistance, and reports to improve and extend existing programs or to design and initiate new ones. Current research and development activities address issues such as the organization of schools for students at risk, the setup and delivery of programs for potential dropouts, involvement of the private sector in education, and the coordination of special services for low-achieving students.

The Students At Risk Program maintains a Regional Resource Center (RRC) which monitors regional needs and resources, disseminates information and products, makes referrals to other agencies, and provides technical assistance. With a collection of over 900 reports and documents, the RRC provides summaries of recent reports and research, identifies and disseminates information on promising approaches and programs for high-risk students, acts as a broker between agencies in the region and nationally, and provides technical assistance on program development and evaluation.

The Students At Risk Program also coordinates the work of the National Network of Regional Educational Laboratories on the theme *Kids At Risk*. As part of this collaboration, the laboratories exchange information on products and programs and co-sponsor conferences. This work enhances the efforts of all the laboratories to provide services for at-risk students in their respective regions.

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This report examines twenty-three schools in their first year of participation in a state-sponsored restructuring initiative called Every Student Succeeds (ESS). Four areas of restructuring are reviewed: 1) curriculum and instruction; 2) governance; 3) professional development of teachers; and 4) coordination of community resources. In general, schools had gone the farthest in implementing their restructuring plans in the area of curriculum and instruction. Many schools were actively involved in enhancing their curriculum to make it more practical, with "real world" applications, and several were experimenting with integrated thematic units and projects. Heterogeneous grouping practices were explored as a way to improve student access to this enhanced curriculum. In the area of governance, many schools were changing traditional decision-making structures by decentralizing into smaller units called "families," and some were establishing schoolwide governance and management teams. Integral to the restructuring process was developing the professional skills of teachers. However, most of these efforts centered on traditional areas of staff training, not on those skills which would help teachers assume new roles and expanded responsibilities such as training in managerial, decision-making, and social service counseling skills. Coordination with outside community resources was an area of restructuring which was the least developed. Implications of this research include how to better integrate limited-English-proficient and other special needs children into schoolwide restructuring activities, how to develop standards of performance which are not differentiated by ability level, and how to develop systems of accountability that allow schools and districts some level of flexibility in the way success is defined.

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INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

In the last few years, educators have been rethinking traditional assumptions about the way schools govern, instruct children, inservice teachers, and operate within the context of a larger network of community agencies. Schools are being asked to undergo a transformation – to restructure every aspect of the schooling experience. While some of the impetus for this initiative comes from those at the school level, many state-level policies and programs have propelled the restructuring movement forward. In California, for example, several initiatives have been enacted to promote reforms in site-based decision-making, integrated curriculum and instruction, professional development of teachers, and interagency coordination.[1] For the most part, these reforms have evolved separately. Recently, however, the state has begun to offer schools a more integrated approach to restructuring through comprehensive state initiatives designed to bring about systemic reform.

Since 1991, California has promoted two such comprehensive restructuring initiatives: Senate Bill 1274 - A Demonstration in Restructuring Public Education (SB1274) and the Every Student Succeeds (ESS) initiative. Both initiatives encourage schools to challenge the assumptions about how they currently "do business" and design innovative programs that engage all students in meaningful learning experiences. Both initiatives also promote restructuring efforts that integrate multiple resources into one comprehensive program and focus on improving student outcomes.

Although these two programs share similar concepts and work closely together, they are fundamentally different in two respects. First, SB1274 is a competitive funding program, while ESS is not. In the past two years, SB1274 has awarded demonstration and planning grants to over 200 schools. ESS on the other hand, operates as a network of schools and provides a framework for restructuring. Schools participating in the network were selected through a process of negotiation with a representative set of districts. The California Department of Education (CDE) supports the ESS initiative through in-kind services that cover costs for networking meetings and guest speakers. A second major difference is that schools participating in SB1274 represent a wider cross-section of schools than those in ESS. SB1274 schools are selected so that 50 percent of the projects are chosen from low-performing schools, 33 percent from moderate-performing schools, and 17 percent from high-performing schools. ESS schools, on the other hand, are all low-performing schools with a significant number of students who are at risk of academic failure.

The ESS framework promotes a restructured regular school program which is inclusive of, and responsive to, the needs of at-risk students and places a heavy emphasis on prevention and early intervention strategies; coordination of categorical programs with the regular education

[1] For example, California's Healthy Start Initiative (SB620), School Improvement Program, Curriculum Frameworks, etc.

program; and coordination of educational, community, health, and social services at the local and state levels. According to the CDE, this program:

> aims to remove artificial walls between categorical and regular education programs in order to create a unified educational system in which all categorical programs and regular education staff can work together. This means that all staff will be working to create an integrated, coherent, comprehensive program for every student, including students considered at risk.

Since most research in restructuring does not highlight the unique challenges low-performing schools face, we focus our examination within the context of the ESS initiative. In broad terms then, the purpose of this study *is to describe the common challenges schools with large numbers of at-risk students face in the initial stages of restructuring and how such efforts impact the learning experiences of at-risk students.*

Two aspects of the context of our examination are worth noting. First, it was difficult to separate the efforts and impact of SB1274 and ESS restructuring initiatives. In fact, the same application form for participation in ESS and SB1274 was issued by the state department. State department staff for both initiatives have worked collaboratively, most recently agreeing to offer the same technical assistance to schools participating in either initiative. Moreover, approximately three out of four schools visited in our sample were participating in both SB1274 and ESS initiatives. This may account for why, at the school site level, staff and community members had considerable difficulty distinguishing between the impact of both programs and tended to perceive them under the general rubric of "restructuring." (Not surprisingly, district staff and some principals were more likely to be able to make such a distinction.)

Likewise, it was difficult to separate "restructuring" from other efforts that have occurred in the state over the years. For example, the state superintendent's middle grades task force report, *Caught in the Middle* (1987), the networks which have followed that report, and state curriculum frameworks have influenced restructuring efforts to some degree. The same was found to be true for task force recommendations at the elementary and high school levels (California Elementary Grades Task Force Report, 1992; California High School Task Force Report, 1992). The impact of all these simultaneous reform initiatives are confounded, so given that, schools are now being strongly encouraged to move away from a fragmented delivery system and, instead, integrate all their reforms into a comprehensive program.

Second, because all of our observations were made during the planning year of the ESS project, several of the schools we looked at were just beginning the process of comprehensive restructuring as it related to the ESS guidelines. Our findings, consequently, have to do with how the restructuring process unfolds against a backdrop of several ongoing state and local reform efforts rather than the final impact of the ESS initiative.

Approach

In the Spring and early Fall of 1992, we visited 23 of the 41 schools designated by the CDE as ESS schools. We visited all eleven participating school districts but, given limited time and resources, were unable to visit all ESS schools. We thus chose to visit no more than three schools per district. In districts with three or fewer ESS schools, we visited all the schools; in those with more ESS schools, we selected two or three schools for visitation. We further selected schools based

upon grade level, diversity of student population, and the school's level of experience in restructuring. In classifying schools, we relied on written documentation as presented in schools' planning grant applications to the CDE, supplemented with information collected through follow-up telephone interviews. Nine elementary schools, five middle schools, and eight high schools were included. Of these, six were in rural districts and the rest in urban/suburban areas. Only a third of the schools we selected had considerable experience in restructuring prior to participation as an ESS school. Most schools had just a few years experience or had begun their restructuring under the ESS (and SB1274) initiative.

Two person teams then conducted one-day site visits to each of the selected schools, spending roughly half a day interviewing district officials involved with ESS. During our site visits, we interviewed and held focus groups with school district personnel including some superintendents, as well as school staff including principals, categorical specialists, teachers, students, and parents. Most of the analysis in this report stems from the qualitative data we collected during the site visit process.

Our framework for analysis is a modified version of a model developed by the University of Wisconsin at Madison's Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.[2] Accordingly, our findings are divided into four major categories: 1) curriculum and instruction; 2) professional development of teachers; 3) governance; and 4) community coordination. While these categories facilitate an organized discussion on restructuring, they create somewhat arbitrary distinctions. Of note, several findings emerged which were cross-cutting and did not easily fit within just one of these four domains. Given that the process of systemic reform is by definition interrelated, such overlap is to be expected.

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[2] For further explanation see: *Brief to Policymakers: Estimating the Extent of School Restructuring* by the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, 1992.

RESTRUCTURING CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

A major challenge schools with diverse, disadvantaged populations face is how to balance the related, but separate goals of enriched curriculum and equity. Both of these objectives are part of the ESS framework – schools are encouraged to **enrich the curriculum** and, at the same time, ensure that all students have **equity in access** to that curriculum. Specifically, the ESS initiative encourages participating schools to develop an enriched, district-adopted or core curriculum based on the state curriculum frameworks. At the same time, schools need to develop instructional and support strategies that enable all students to succeed in learning that curriculum. The ESS approach further encourages schools to coordinate with health and social service agencies in order that needs arising from poverty or poor health conditions are met and do not jeopardize students' potential for performance in an enriched curriculum.

KEY FINDINGS

Most school plans made curriculum and instruction their highest priority and invested most resources in that area. Schools sought to improve student learning experiences through restructuring strategies that focused on curriculum enrichment, curriculum access, and meeting students' affective needs. Key findings are:

- Schools experimented with integrated thematic units and "hands-on" project approaches to instruction in order to enrich the curriculum;
- Schools altered grouping practices within schools and classrooms in order to ensure academic success and/or access to the core curriculum for all students; *and*
- Schools experimented with ways to provide a more personalized experience for students to meet their counseling and support service needs.

INTEGRATED THEMATIC APPROACHES TO INSTRUCTION

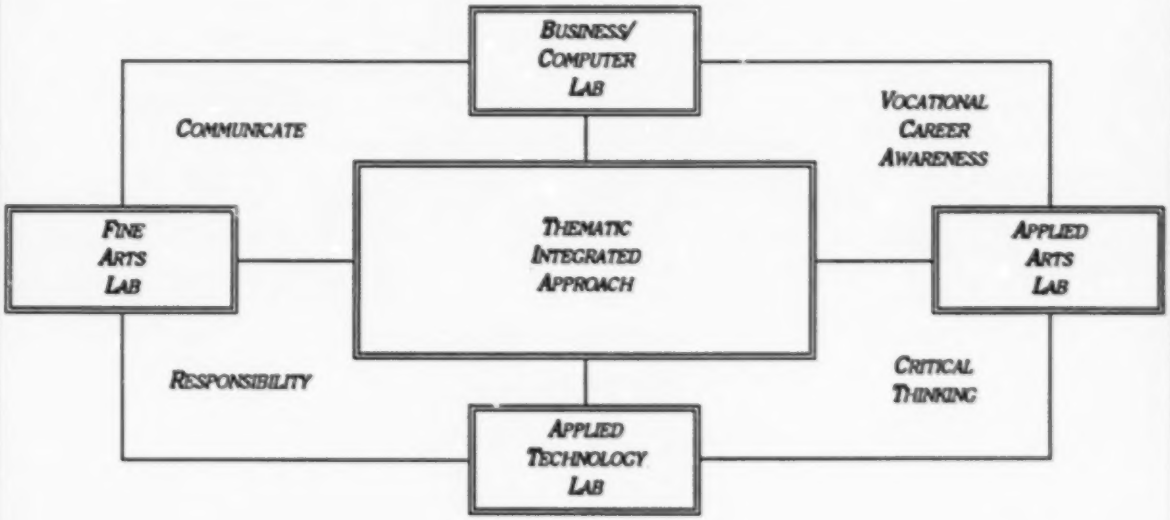
We found all schools we visited engaged in efforts to enrich the curriculum and engage students through more varied learning experiences. Many of these efforts had been ongoing prior to the state's adoption of SB1274 and ESS restructuring initiatives. Most schools, for example, were actively involved in implementing California's curriculum frameworks and various state task force recommendations on middle, elementary, and high school reforms. In combination with the newer state restructuring initiatives, these frameworks and task force reports appeared to have a considerable impact in shaping the kinds of strategies schools designed.

A central recommendation of several state task force reports is to develop more integrated thematic units or projects. Picking up on this theme, many schools' restructuring plans included integrated thematic units as one means of enriching and making the curriculum more meaningful for students (see box on page 5). Typically, a thematic approach to curriculum and instruction called for teachers, individually or in groups, to work together in integrating concepts from various

Engaging Students: An Integrated Thematic Approach

A thematic approach to instruction was an especially promising strategy of Mountville High School's restructuring efforts. Located in a rural/suburban area, Mountville is a continuation high school that serves approximately 190 students: 62 percent Hispanic, 36 percent Caucasian, and two percent Filipino. The migrant population is about 30 percent, and increasing numbers of limited-English-proficient students enroll each year. Mountville's students are considered to be some of the most at risk in the district; most students are typically achieving at the fifth or sixth grade level when they first enroll and share a common history of failure in the a regular high school setting.

To bring relevance to the curriculum and prepare students with skills for their future careers, Mountville High is restructuring its program consistent with the diagram below. With a thematic integrated approach to instruction as the focal point of its restructuring program, the school featured four uniquely different laboratory experiences for students: business/computer, applied arts, fine arts, and applied technology. Teachers are clustered into four self-selected teaching teams that represent language arts, social studies, math, and science. Each team integrated these academic subjects around a specific theme or focus (one for each lab) and worked with the same small group of students for about a nine week period (one quarter). In a school year, students rotate through each of these laboratory experiences.



Each lab also blends a unique set of career skills within the academic program that culminates in the creation of a visual product. This visual product, along with a written piece and an oral presentation, are used to demonstrate student learning. For example, students in cooperative learning groups research the history, lifestyle, and governmental structure of the Ohlone Indians. Students then use their historical knowledge of local Indians to reproduce native crafts and tools as final student projects in their applied arts lab. Students participate in activities that simulate the history of indigenous peoples while at the same time learn about Indian values such as a strong work ethic and group versus individual responsibility.

At the time of our visit, the school had just piloted this approach, and the results were encouraging. Both staff and students reported working harder than before, with more enthusiasm and motivation.

curricular or subject matter areas in designing learning activities around a central theme. Schools we visited organized lessons around such topics as the global environment, rites of passage, immigration, and ecological issues.

Integrated thematic instruction varied along several key dimensions. First, it focused on different organizational units. Themes were identified for the entire school, particular grade levels, or smaller organizational units within the school, such as "families" or "houses." Second, schools varied in the extent to which teachers worked together. For example, in some schools, individual teachers created their own units or activities based on a common theme; while in others, they worked as a group to integrate concepts from various subject matter areas. Finally, some schools used a team teaching approach, pairing teachers from different disciplines; while in other schools, teachers taught separately.

Purposes of Thematic Units

The thematic approach is intended to foster critical thinking skills, offer more depth in learning, use real world experiences, and increase student engagement. Many schools, especially elementary and middle schools, used thematic units as a way to develop critical and higher-order thinking skills. For instance, in one middle school, a set of classrooms used Socratic discussion techniques to develop reasoning and critical thinking skills in a thematic unit based on the economic issues of depleting rain forests in developing countries. A thematic approach also gives students more opportunity to explore a topic in-depth and from different perspectives. The study of vanishing rain forests, for example, considered the impact on the global ecology and indigenous peoples as well as the economy.

Thematic units were also a vehicle for more "real world" applications and hands-on learning experiences. For example, one district's science program incorporated a life lab (garden) and visits to the nearby aquarium into the curriculum. Within a thematic unit on ethnic immigration in their community, a high school developed projects that showed the spiritual and cultural lives of Indians who once lived there. Students "camped out," identifying plants and herbs the Indians used, and crafting objects from animal skins.

Accessing local community resources was another popular strategy in developing a "real world" thematic curriculum. One middle school piloted an interdisciplinary program that engaged students in a week-long, field-based learning experience that built on exhibits and other resources of local museums and the zoo. Other schools linked up with local business and industry to establish school-to-work transition and mentoring programs that incorporated the development of skills needed in the local business community.

Student engagement and teacher enthusiasm appeared to increase as the thematic approach was introduced. Paraphrasing the remarks of one teacher:

> I haven't lectured in three weeks, but I'm exhausted. I'm answering a lot of [student] questions, and I'm much happier. Kids are working harder; they're more engaged. Now [students] lose track of time, they don't take their breaks, and they ask to stay in the room to complete their projects.

When asked how they enjoyed the new integrated, project-driven curriculum, students were enthusiastic:

> I really like it. At [my other high school], we would have classes in different subjects. With this system, I get to type, use a computer. I get to read. I'm learning about Indians, which I never had the opportunity to learn about. It makes it funner for us because we're having a good time doing it.

> It's fun. You don't just do math; you do different things, but it comes out being math. One teacher notices that we're doing more in a week than we usually do in a month. I really enjoy it and don't notice that time is flying so quickly. It's weird. We're here at school until after school.

Barriers to a Thematic Approach

Some factors tended to complicate the development of an integrated thematic approach to instruction. Criteria found in state-mandated or district curriculum frameworks, for example, made the design of individualized school curricula more difficult. In particular, schools struggled to integrate all grade-level material across several subjects, as recommended or required by curriculum guidelines, with topical themes, and found this to be a very complex undertaking. Moreover, teachers were concerned that the emphasis on themes would mean a loss of necessary breadth in the curriculum and might not meet all the requirements of the curriculum frameworks. Some, for example, suggested covering unaddressed aspects of the frameworks during silent sustained reading time. Nevertheless, the potential benefits of this strategy, such as improved depth of learning and increased student engagement, made it a promising alternative to many involved.

Student Grouping Practices

As part of restructuring, many schools were attempting to alter grouping practices at both the school and classroom level. Among the most common strategies were to: 1) divide the school into smaller organizational units referred to as "families," "houses," or "pods"; 2) eliminate deeply entrenched tracking practices through "untracking"; and 3) group children across ages and grade levels in "multi-grade" classes.

Family Structures

A family structure typically included four to six teachers from the core subject areas of English, social studies, math, and science who worked with the same group of students (about 120 to 180 students) from the same grade level. Teachers within a family were assigned a common preparation time, enabling them to do more joint planning and joint conferencing with students and parents. In addition, teachers were often assigned additional advisory or counseling responsibilities within their family. Other dimensions of family structure are described in the box on page 8.

While most schools have only just begun to implement their plans, the family structures show promise. One middle school, for example, created interdisciplinary teams of four or five teachers who work with about 180 students over a period of three years. Beginning with a small pilot of five teachers and 90 students, the school has recently added four new teams, and most teachers are eager to join. As an original team member commented, "Most staff initially just pooh-

poohed the idea of teams. But once they saw how well the teams worked and how much students were benefiting, now everyone wants to be a team."

Several advantages of forming family units were cited by teachers. The common planning time allowed for teachers to work closer together. This has helped teachers tailor the educational program to meet the individual needs of students. It has also made it easier for a language specialist team to identify and move misplaced students or to simply regroup them. In the past, it would have taken them much longer to identify such students, and the bureaucratic barriers associated would also have slowed the process down. The smaller numbers of students within families make maintaining discipline easier, and this structure allowed teachers to establish closer working relationships with parents. Because teachers were more personally involved, teachers and parents could reach a greater level of understanding about the problems the child may be having in class.

"Untracking"

"Untracking" or "detracking" was a popular restructuring strategy among secondary schools. By introducing heterogeneous grouping practices, schools aim to provide all students with better access to the same curriculum.

Tracking can refer to a range of ability-related grouping practices used in schools, such as grouping students by ability for the entire day in elementary schools, assigning students to classes based on test scores or grades or scheduling them together for blocks of classes according to general ability measures, and establishing programs or courses of study where senior high students follow certain curricular paths and enroll in different levels of academic courses intended to prepare them for different postsecondary destinations (see Oakes, 1992). "Untracking" in secondary schools then, refers not only to heterogeneously grouping students within classes but to doing away with the broader programmatic divisions in types and levels of courses that might divide students into rigid college preparatory, vocational (non-college bound), and remedial curriculum tracks.

Variations on the Family Theme

Apart from the governance changes that family or house structures introduced, implementing family structures also involved critical choices about grouping and instructional strategies that could alter experiences for both students and teachers. Some of these major dimensions are:

- ***Single versus Multi-Age Grouping**: In most cases, schools continued to group students according to grade levels; though in a few schools, students from two grade levels were included.*
- ***Homogeneous versus Heterogeneous Grouping**: Families usually included heterogeneous groups of students, though a few schools found it advantageous to group students by ability in order to provide instruction in certain advanced-level courses within families.*
- ***Length of Grouping**: A decision schools confronted was whether to keep students together for a single year (e.g., their freshman or first year) or for a student's entire stay or career at the school. Similarly, whether teachers stayed with the same group of students for a year or longer varied across schools.*
- ***Individual versus Team Teaching**: In some instances, teachers taught as a team, usually in pairs based on math-science and English-social studies subject combinations. In other cases, teachers continued to teach individual subjects. This was true even with an integrated thematic approach to instruction.*
- ***Regular Periods versus Extended Blocks of Time**: Some schools stayed on the same traditional schedule of roughly 50-minute blocks. Other schools opted to have instruction for an extended period of time, both in combined (English-social studies combination) or single-subject classes.*

Schools we visited grouped students heterogeneously in several different ways. Some high schools simply collapsed tracks, reassigning students into one or sometimes two tracks (typically combining the vocational and remedial curriculum tracks). Students were then heterogeneously grouped for all classes within that track. In middle and junior high schools, requirements were changed so that all students were heterogeneously grouped for particular subjects, sometimes referred to as the "core curriculum" and were expected to meet the same requirements. For example, several schools required all seventh or eighth graders to take pre-Algebra or added additional science requirements for all students. This practice was seen to be a way of raising expectations of academic success for all students, not just a select few.

Children with special needs, such as Chapter 1 or special education students, were also integrated in regular classrooms as a way of equalizing access to the same curriculum. In many schools we visited, pull-out programs for Chapter 1 students and self-contained classroom instruction for special education students were maintained only for students with the most severe needs, and as many children as possible were integrated into regular classes.

Potential Pitfalls of Untracking. We found many schools eager to tackle the problem of inequitable access to a core curriculum through heterogeneous grouping practices. While their eagerness to do away with tracking is understandable, there is some evidence that the alternatives may not improve the quality of education for all students and may, in fact, have a negative impact on some.

- Inadequate Teacher Training and Support: Some teachers were reluctant to move toward grouping students heterogeneously because they felt limited in their ability to teach students with such a wide range of unique learning needs. In particular, many teachers weren't sure how to deal with limited-English-proficient (LEP) students who were mainstreamed into their classes. Some teachers were opposed to heterogeneous grouping without some type of in-class support, i.e., an instructional aide. Without appropriate training or support, some teachers simply slowed down the curriculum so that more capable students were bored. Other teachers made no changes so that new students were lost.

- Student Frustration: More capable and motivated students expressed frustration about "always having to help other students and not getting my own work done," "doing another student's share" in cooperative learning groups, and having less access to teachers than they did in the past. Several teachers expressed concern about the pace or inadequate attention that certain groups of students received in new efforts to accommodate all student needs.

- Loss of Community Support: For some schools untracking resulted in a loss of community and parental support because specialized or advanced classes were no longer offered.

Many of the concerns raised by heterogeneous grouping practices relate to the inadequate training and support for staff and the lack of preparation of parents and students about the impact of such changing practices. Perhaps the greatest challenge is changing underlying attitudes held by teachers, students, and parents about the capabilities and benefits that different sub-populations of students bring to schools and classrooms. LEP students, for example, pose an instructional challenge for which many teachers feel ill-prepared, particularly when the students may represent several different languages. A few had come to realize, however, that building a multicultural

curriculum around activities that reflect the strengths of various cultures is one promising strategy that schools have tried.

Multi-Age Grouping

Schools also experimented with multi-age grouping as a means of narrowing the range of abilities, developmental levels, or learning styles within a class so teachers could better tailor instruction to the needs of a diverse student population. Several schools were exploring how to group children homogeneously by ability in multi-age or non-graded groups (i.e., heterogeneously grouped by grade and age).

Schools we visited used the terms "mixed age," "multi-age," and "non-graded" interchangeably to refer to this grouping practice. However, in some schools there were clear distinctions in how these different terms translated into practice. Rural or very small schools, for example, may combine children of different grades within a class out of necessity but maintain grade-level distinctions in instruction. In other cases, however, children are intentionally mixed by age and grade to capitalize on the different ages and abilities of children by giving them opportunities to interact and learn from each other. Finally, some schools combined grade levels so they could create homogeneous groups of students by ability level rather than age.

Schools experimenting with multi-grade classrooms frequently grouped students by levels of language development and, on occasion, academic ability for a particular subject or within a family structure (see box on page 11). These homogeneous groups were thought to provide students with more opportunities for academic success in two major ways. Elementary schools grouped students by language development level because these groupings were believed to be more "developmentally appropriate" ways of meeting diverse student academic needs than traditional age groupings for most subjects, especially language arts and social studies. In other schools, teachers believed homogeneous groups enabled them to meet diverse sets of student needs because of the narrower range of abilities in a class.

Potential Pitfalls of Multi-Age, Multi-Grade Groupings. Grouping students homogeneously by developmental level segregates students by language, ethnicity, race, and social class. For example, in schools that use language ability as the basis for groups, it's common for classes to be ethnically segregated with English-only classes made up of Anglo and African-American students, and, depending on their numbers, Hispanic and Asian students could also be in separate classes. Teachers expressed concern about these practices. Some teachers feared the English language development of LEP students would be hindered because of limited opportunities for interaction with native English speakers. Potential differences in curriculum and instruction for these different groups of students raised equity concerns in some schools, since grouping by ability level or primary language creates a potential for the curriculum to be watered-down or weakened. Some teachers pointed out that students who were homogeneously grouped for developmental reasons could be labeled or become "permanent" members of their groups, another form of "tracking."

A few schools were well aware of the tendency for homogeneous grouping to lead to another form of tracking. To counter this, they conducted frequent assessments and created exit criteria for student placement and movement between groups. These safeguards were intended to insure students' opportunities to move among groups. For similar reasons, other schools limited homogeneous grouping practices to certain periods or subjects. For the most part, however, schools

placed students in the same groups for a full school year, with no procedures for frequent assessment and reassignment, limiting mobility and equal access to a core curriculum.

Grouping for Instruction

Schools experimented with several instructional strategies and curricular approaches to accommodate students' different learning styles and paces. Many teachers, for example, introduced cooperative learning projects where students with different strengths and weaknesses could help each other. Teachers felt opportunities for peer assistance within these groups was one way of dealing with greater diversity in the classroom. Past research (Cohen, 1986) also suggests that well-constructed groups in which specific roles and tasks are assigned to high and low status students can alter student attitudes about and interactions with other students. In addition to the project-oriented curricula and learning activities that build on community resources, greater use of computers and technology was mentioned by teachers as a means to engage a broader range of students.

Taking their cues from research on "brain-compatible learning" and multiple intelligences, several schools designed "enriched-learning environment" techniques that use music, color and lighting in ways which theoretically stimulate the different intelligences and hemispheres of the brain. The

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS: GROUPING STRATEGIES

As part of its restructuring effort, Cedar Elementary is experimenting with different grouping strategies to maximize access to its core curriculum. Located in a large urban district, Cedar has a very diverse student population of about 775 students: 28 percent Hispanic, 22 percent Asian, 14 percent African-American, and 32 percent Caucasian. About 40 percent of these students are considered limited-English-proficient and come from primarily Spanish- or Cambodian-speaking backgrounds.

In an effort to ensure that all students, regardless of language ability, have an opportunity to learn the same curriculum, the school piloted a two-pronged, non-graded (multi-age) approach in the primary grades: 1) homogeneous student groupings based upon English language proficiency for a thematically integrated language arts program; and 2) mixed language ability, heterogeneous groups for all other subjects (science, art, music, career awareness, health, and physical education.) In addition, lengthening daily schedules by 15 to 20 minutes provides primary teachers with a common planning time one day a week.

In the morning, students are grouped homogeneously and receive instruction over 2 two-hour blocks of time that integrate language arts, reading, and social studies around thematic units. For teachers, homogeneous grouping has meant "the span [in abilities] is now narrow enough that you can teach a lesson and not make too many adjustments." For the remaining two hours of the day, students are assigned to one of eight heterogeneous groups and remain with that group for the year. These groups of students "rotate" through all other subjects on a four-week basis. With the exception of art and science, which are taught over a lengthened two-hour block, music, career awareness, health, and physical education are taught in one-hour blocks. Like secondary school teachers, these primary teachers now "specialize" in a subject area. They also jointly plan subject curriculum with other teacher(s) to ensure that the same core curriculum is being taught to all groups. Rotations are especially appealing to these elementary teachers. "I love it," one teacher reported, "because I have those kids for four weeks for real intensive instruction, and I only have to plan for one subject instead of four."

Teachers report that students are more engaged and have more opportunities to assume leadership roles, especially in homogeneous groups and cooperative learning activities. For Cedar staff, the fact that they have fewer behavioral problems and more LEP students communicating in English are signs that their efforts are working. In addition, teacher satisfaction is higher. As one teacher summarized:

> *They're getting a higher-quality instruction and program because teachers aren't being pulled in so many directions. And kids really benefit because we're building a family (assigned groups for rotation). We now have the ability to really focus in on kids' needs and have the time to talk about them and devise alternate instructional strategies.*

rationale behind such an instructional approach is to provide a varied enough curriculum to complement each child's individual learning style.

Personalizing Experiences: Meeting Student Affective Needs

Recognizing that many students have emotional, psychological, social, counseling, health, and family needs that aren't met by a purely academic approach, schools were experimenting with ways to provide a more personalized experience for students. Some schools created advisories or smaller organizational structures, such as families, that gave teachers more counseling-type responsibilities.

Advisories

Among secondary schools, advisory periods were a popular strategy for addressing non-academic needs. These short, 15-20 minute periods are designed to provide students the opportunity to meet daily with the same teacher and discuss issues relevant to their lives outside of school, such as relationships, cultural differences, and conflict resolution. Personal counseling for students with particular needs is an additional expectation. Some schools have longer periods (40-55 minutes) during which a specific curriculum designed to teach values or build self-esteem is taught. "Pride Assemblies" (where students and classes are recognized for good attendance, behavior, or exceptional progress), intramural sports activities, and field trips are frequently included during these longer advisory periods to build the social skills and self-esteem of students.

Creating a Nurturing Atmosphere Through Families

Family, house, or pod structures were intended to provide students with more personal attention and a more comfortable, family-like environment for learning. Advisory or counseling responsibilities for team members is a feature common to many families. In some schools, a particular teacher (not necessarily a counselor) was charged with the counseling responsibilities for students in that family. Many teachers found that the continuity of work with a smaller group of students and teachers meant "kids are more willing to talk with us about their emotional and family problems. And we have a better understanding of what affects student behavior and work." According to staff, family structures also facilitated teachers' ability to address student needs. During common planning times, teachers met together as a group to more thoroughly explore the root of student problems. In some families, teachers also used this time to meet with parents for discussions about the strengths and weakness of a student at home and at school. Because they worked more closely with other teachers and parents, a broader array of strategies and possible solutions could be tried with any given student.

Expanding the Student Study Team

Another approach to addressing students affective needs was to expand the existing assessment team usually associated with making referrals and diagnosis for students with serious learning, attendance, or other problems. These teams consist of psychologists, speech pathologists, counselors, and educational specialists and are usually referred to as the student study team (SST). With restructuring, some schools are expanding this model to intervene earlier and assist a broader range of students in a more comprehensive way. Whether it's called a Problem-Solving Team or Student Attendance Review Board, schools expanding the SST concept typically involved parents and students in group discussions with teachers and other resource staff in more meaningful ways. In

one school, for example, parents were asked what the child is good at and what problems she or he had at home. Students were asked about their strengths and weaknesses. The SST then decides who should be responsible for which future actions.

Student Conferences

Building on the success of an expanded SST process, student goal-setting conferences have evolved as another promising strategy for further personalizing student experiences in both the academic and non-academic areas. One elementary school moved from its traditional format of parent-teacher conferences about grades toward meetings where parents, teachers, and students discuss student strengths and weaknesses and then jointly set goals for students. Because it worked so well, the school is considering holding these conferences earlier in the academic year and more frequently.

RESTRUCTURING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

How a school is organized and operated – its governance, management, and leadership – are key elements in the process of restructuring. In fact, for many schools and districts the concept of restructuring is synonymous with altering the school governance structures through site-based management and shared decision-making. In site-based management, centralized district power over decisions about curriculum and instruction, staffing, budgeting, as well as the accountability mechanisms and procedures for sustaining the organizational change process is transferred to the school. Through shared decision-making, management and governance within the school is spread more widely, empowering staff and locating authority for decisions in a broader range of individuals.

KEY FINDINGS

Most of the schools we visited were attempting to change the governance and management structures and processes. However, because most were still in a planning stage of restructuring, many changes had not yet been fully implemented.

- Organizational changes in schools, such as dividing into smaller units, often precipitated new forms of governance and decision-making. For example, as schools were divided into sub-units (families, houses, schools-within-a-school), authority and decision-making were distributed more broadly. Individual families had responsibility for their curriculum and instruction, scheduling, grouping practices, and occasionally budget, but seldom had blanket authority for budget; in some schools, differences between families were dramatic.

- Many schools set up a schoolwide governance or management team composed of teachers, other staff, or parents to broaden the decision-making base within the school; input from students was also sought in some cases. Principals shared some management responsibilities with teachers but maintained authority and decision-making power in critical areas. Teachers assumed greater responsibility for decisions about curriculum and also were part of the planning for restructuring and school reorganization. Budgeting and personnel were still the province of school administrators, however.

- Teachers assumed new roles and expanded responsibilities by participating in planning and proposal development activities. In some schools, only a core group of teachers were involved; in others, nearly all teachers were assigned to restructuring committees or task forces.

- For new structures of governing and managing schools to be successfully implemented, traditional leaders (primarily principals and district officials) need to provide their support. District mandates alone were not effective at bringing about change.

CHANGES IN GOVERNANCE

Virtually every school we visited had tried to involve teachers and other staff in the management and governance of the school. The extent of their involvement and the strategies for their inclusion varied across schools, however. We found two common approaches to changing traditional governance structures. One approach reorganized the school into smaller units and decentralized decision-making to these units. Another approach was to set up a schoolwide governance team composed of teachers, other staff, or parents to broaden the decision-making within the school as a whole.

"Family" Governance Structures

Organizational changes in schools, such as dividing into smaller units, often precipitated new forms of governance and decision-making. Among secondary (and elementary) schools, dividing the school into subunits called houses, families, pods, or schools-within-a-school was a popular restructuring approach that frequently had implications for the way decisions were made. For example, decision-making authority over curricular and instructional issues, such as how to group students, as given to each "family." We found the differences between families in the decisions they made and how they were implemented could be dramatic. In one school, for instance, Family A assumed control of the curriculum and instruction, altering the time allotted to subjects, adding an integrated thematic project, teaming for instruction, and performing new student assessments. Teacher and student allegiance shifted from the school to the family. Family B in the same school took a more traditional approach. Classes remained separate, and each teacher independently designed his or her own classroom curriculum and instruction within a traditional 50-minute period.

SCHOOLWIDE GOVERNANCE: COMMUNITY COUNCIL BLUEPRINT

Johnson Middle School established a "community council" which is charged with making all decisions that affect schoolwide operations. The council makes decisions based upon what its members believe "is best for [Johnson] students" and which are reflective of their commitment to fulfill and support their "Dream" (mission). Members on the community council are supposed to represent the total school community. In addition, because Johnson School is committed to teacher empowerment, at least 50 percent of all members on the council must be teachers. Council membership is composed of the school's "Corporate Executive Officer" (principal), categorical program resource specialists, business partners, and representatives from Johnson's "families," including teachers, parents, and students. The school also has budget, curriculum, guidance, professional practice, and technology task forces which select a representative to the council. In the purest spirit of egalitarian democracy, all decisions are made through consensus.

Schoolwide Governance Teams

The shift to smaller organizational units often was accompanied by changes in schoolwide governance structures. In most cases, for example, representatives from each house or family sat on a schoolwide governance team that was responsible for policies affecting the whole school, such as discipline, an overall school mission, cross-cutting curricular themes, and security (see box on this page). In other schools, schoolwide governance teams were already in place, made up of teachers and other staff, community members, and parents. These teams met monthly or bi-monthly to consider issues of importance to the school. Most often, they dealt with curriculum and instruction issues; but in some of the schools, the team made scheduling, classroom grouping, and other organizational decisions.

At the initial stages of restructuring, the most visible way for involving teachers was through planning committees developing proposals for state restructuring funds. Some schools had,

however, formed restructuring teams or committees, but responsibilities here too were almost always restricted to planning and proposal development. While input would be solicited from teachers and other staff in several areas, in most cases, the principal maintained final decision-making power. As one principal put it, "We discuss issues until I decide what to do."

Regardless of the impetus behind the creation of schoolwide governance teams, two aspects of these teams are worth noting. First, there was no indication that any of the members were ever trained for their new responsibilities and functions. Second, the areas of decision-making were, for the most part, restricted to curriculum and instruction. In schools where the site-based management team ventured beyond these areas, seldom did they touch on budget and personnel.

Changes in Schoolwide Planning Structures

We visited schools shortly before proposals for the state's restructuring demonstration projects (SB1274) were due. Nearly all schools had involved teachers in the proposal planning and decision-making process. Schools usually began with meetings of all teachers and administrators, including one or more district representatives; then either a core group was formed or sub-committees were established. Some districts sponsored retreats or day-long sessions for teachers, parents, and community members to introduce the concept of restructuring and build early support. They discussed needs and set up a process for developing a restructuring plan.

But schools differed in the inclusiveness of the process. In some sites, only a small group of teachers formed the restructuring committee that did planning and proposal-writing. It was up to this group to enlist other teachers in the restructuring effort, either as part of the planning process or when implementation began. At one high school, for example, the assistant principal led the inquiry into the restructuring process. She copied articles for discussion and convened meetings of the core group.

In other schools, a much larger percentage of teachers was involved. For example, at one rural school, the district director of curriculum and the school principal shared leadership for restructuring. They convened teachers for a series of meetings on restructuring and attempted to develop a common level of knowledge among the staff. Starting with a collection of articles provided by the state, they discussed a broad range of issues. Eventually, this group was divided into several sub-committees around curriculum and instruction, evaluation (including student assessment) and planning, resource management, and school-community relations. Other schools, especially larger secondary schools, set up as many as a dozen task forces and tried to ensure that committees represented grade levels or departments and special programs. Over time, many schools also developed procedures for input and feedback from the entire staff as well as the community. For instance, recommendations from committees might be presented at regular meetings of the entire staff for a vote of approval or further input.

Because of these experiences in schoolwide planning and proposal development, the way in which teachers think about and approach their work is changing. Prior to restructuring, most teachers spent their planning time on developing daily classroom curriculum and instructional materials. Now that teachers are more involved in schoolwide planning activities with colleagues, they have a schoolwide, instead of classroom, perspective. Staff at many schools commented that, as a result of these experiences, they are "more collaborative than before" and "are now a collective

body rather than a bunch of solos." Consistent with past research, we found teacher participation in schoolwide planning to promote more trust and collegiality as well.

The development of integrated thematic units or projects was another schoolwide activity area which brought teachers together for planning. Teachers who participated in family structures or shared, ungraded classrooms often had a common planning time to carry out these activities. In secondary schools, common preparation or conference periods for teachers were scheduled, or school schedules were adjusted to allow an hour or two each week for joint planning.

Changes in Leadership: Authority and Support for Change

For new structures of governing and managing schools to be successfully implemented, they need the support of traditional leaders. In one high school, for example, the vice-principal had assumed leadership for guiding the restructuring change process. He convened a planning group and built enthusiasm among that core group of teachers for significantly altering the way classes were organized and taught – team-teaching, projects, and longer periods were all discussed. These teachers were not only interested but filled with excitement over the prospects. However, a larger faction of teachers was skeptical and sought confirmation from the principal. Because the principal did not actively support the core group's plans and did not give them real authority and power over restructuring, dissenting teachers hung back, sabotaging the core group's plans with their passivity. As one teacher put it, "This too shall pass."

At the same time, we found that district mandates alone to create new governance structures are ineffective in bringing about school change. According to one principal, his district required all schools to implement site-based management, without providing necessary guidance and support for bringing about changes within the schools. At his school, staff interpreted the edict as a narrow focus on setting up decision-making structures, which they felt was misplaced. As one staff member put it, "The strategy of restructuring with an emphasis on shared decision-making is a mistake. It should be on the curriculum and instruction." As a result, some teachers became more concerned with testing the limits of shared decision-making than focusing on how to restructure the school. A small group of old-guard teachers tried to gain control of school governance and sabotage the principal's plans. They eventually failed, and once the crisis was over, a set of committees was formed that more adequately reflected the sentiments of a broader representation of the staff.

RESTRUCTURING THE PROFESSIONAL LIVES OF TEACHERS

School restructuring often changes the roles and responsibilities of teachers' work. However, one of the major dilemmas faced in schools' efforts to improve the professional lives of teachers was how to balance existing demands on teachers' time with the additional time needed to change attitudes and develop new skills. Assuming a greater role in decision-making and taking part in increased professional development opportunities required time for reflection, dialoguing, and learning new approaches to teaching.

KEY FINDINGS

The roles and responsibilities of teachers' professional lives differed among the sites visited. While some schools had greatly expanded the roles of teachers, others were only beginning to consider such changes. In addition, we found:

- Expanding roles and responsibilities fell into two categories. First, most new roles and responsibilities for teachers related to curriculum and instruction. Teachers were expected to adopt new behaviors, attitudes, and practices such as collaborating on instructional activities with colleagues, teaching with a different orientation to subject matter, developing new counseling relationships with students, and using a wider repertoire of strategies for dealing with the diversity of linguistic, cultural, and learning style needs of students. Second, teachers were involved in school governance committees that conducted schoolwide planning and decision-making.

- Teachers were initially enthusiastic about the changes associated with restructuring. However, many who had been involved with restructuring the longest acknowledged that the energizing effect of restructuring soon wore off as they faced the long hours and hard work involved in school site decision-making and assuming new responsibilities.

- Staff development activities were the main vehicle for introducing teachers to their new roles and responsibilities. Most schools planned staff development activities that outlined relevant concepts and techniques related to both the content and process of restructuring. But few schools supported the ongoing activities that are necessary for staff to learn, practice, and master these new skills and orientations.

- Limited resources for staff development made it difficult to sustain the needed ongoing staff development activities and long-range plans. A few schools, however, were experimenting with summer institutes, trainer-of-trainer approaches, and professional development schools, which provide more intensive and/or ongoing training for teachers.

Expanded Roles and Responsibilities

School restructuring introduced new roles and responsibilities for teachers, altering the boundaries of what teachers considered their work and how they approached it.

Working Collaboratively with Colleagues

Most restructuring strategies and activities required teachers to work in groups rather than in isolation. In addition to the new roles in schoolwide planning and more opportunities for joint curriculum planning, several changes associated with restructuring required teachers to interact more frequently and work more closely with colleagues. For example, mainstreaming compensatory education, special education and limited-English-proficient students affected the ways in which classroom teachers worked with resource specialists. In some cases, restructuring introduced to teachers quite different ways of working with one another. Family structures, for example, involved new decision-making and administrative or student advisement responsibilities that teachers had to work out as a group. In other cases, the strategies simply expanded or revised prior practice. Team teaching, for example, was part of many school restructuring plans and included co-teaching a class or developing a common curriculum to be taught by individual teachers.

Changes in Orientation

Restructuring strategies and themes also required teachers to alter their more traditional orientations to the curriculum or a particular subject. For instance, secondary school plans for reorganizing junior and senior classes around career pathways and the transition from school to work required teachers to think differently about their discipline. "Science is not just for scientists," one teacher explained. Schools need to meld academic and vocational education. Also, nearly all schools attempted to integrate key concepts across the curriculum. This required a greater shift in thinking for secondary teachers, who usually specialize within a discipline, than for elementary teachers, who are typically responsible for teaching most subjects.

Working with Diverse Groups of Students

Restructuring efforts required teachers to develop new attitudes toward and ways of working with a more diverse student population. For instance, the advisory periods in family structures were intended to develop closer relationships among teachers and students but also meant new roles for teachers in student advisement and counseling. Mainstreaming special need students, untracking secondary school programs, and other forms of heterogeneous grouping of students called on teachers to expand their repertoire of strategies for dealing with the broader range of learning styles and paces within their classes. At the same time, these strategies often required staff to alter their basic beliefs and attitudes about students. For instance, an underlying assumption of mainstreaming and untracking efforts is that all students can learn at high levels – an idea that goes against the experiences and beliefs of many teachers.

Balancing New Roles with Old Ones

One of the greatest difficulties teachers faced was balancing the demands of restructuring with their ongoing responsibilities for classroom instruction. For instance, some teachers found that a common preparation time enabled them to do joint planning and parent or student conferencing but left them little time for individual preparation of lessons and specific activities. When teachers had other classes to teach outside of their respective families, the issue of preparation time became

more critical. Several schools opted to pilot small scale restructuring activities such as interdisciplinary teaming, family and non-graded structures, and an integrated thematic curriculum. At the same time, however, they were developing more comprehensive plans – a process which was exhausting to all involved. Teachers involved in both activities sometimes felt overwhelmed, describing the situation as one of "flying a plane at the same time you're building it."

School administrators described a similar dilemma. For many of them, sharing authority and assuming a more neutral role as facilitator was a challenging experience. Along with teachers, they sometimes found themselves deficient in the consensus-building and negotiation skills seldom used in more traditional decision-making structures. As one school principal said, "We felt it just wasn't working sometimes because we were trying to learn process skills about shared decision-making at the same time we were involved in shared decision-making."

PROFESSIONAL AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In general, we found that most schools tried to incorporate staff development activities into restructuring, but had neither the time nor resources to greatly alter instructional practices and underlying beliefs. Schools typically held all-day training sessions to promote paradigm shifts on topics such as "how children learn." Other schools focused their staff development activities on the specifics of their curricular and instructional interventions. For instance, inservices on thematic instruction, higher-order thinking skills, the various state subject matter projects, and state curriculum frameworks were common. More information on major structural interventions such as families and non-graded classrooms were more likely to be obtained through visitations to schools already implementing such programs.

Unfortunately, few schools developed long-range staff development plans. For instance, while many schools held inservice training to prepare staff for thinking about restructuring in new ways, they seldom continued to train staff on building or sustaining change. Many of the staff development activities held at schools or in which teachers participated were one-shot workshops with no follow-up. In addition, training for new roles and responsibilities was often neglected, as was that connected with school governance and decision-making. For instance, the new counseling roles that teachers were expected to assume under family structures were often forgotten. Likewise, teachers were not given training in ways to deal with the greater student diversity in classrooms. As a result, some teachers watered down the curriculum, and frustration levels grew for both staff and students.

Promising Approaches

There were a few exceptions. Some schools adjusted their schedules to give teachers a block of time during the week for planning and ongoing staff development activities. One school trained teachers over a series of sessions to read and use research and regularly convened teachers to discuss specific issues. In addition to these strategies, we found three types of staff development activities that are designed to provide more intensive and/or ongoing experiences for teachers than the typical one-shot workshop:

- *Summer Institutes*: Schools offer intensive two- to four-week institutes over the summer. For example, as part of a science improvement project in one district, teachers participated in a summer institute to learn a new method of instruction. Such strategies are more difficult

in year-round school settings or situations where teachers are committed to other jobs or plans for the summer.

- *Trainer-of-Trainer or Cadre Models*: Several schools intensively train one or a small group of teachers for several weeks; these teachers then train and/or coach other teachers in their school in the strategies they've learned. One potential problem is that the quality and intensity of the training may diminish as the training is passed on.

- *Professional Development Schools*: A few schools designed comprehensive plans that would provide learning, mastery, and renewal for staff in a school through the provision of release-time, peer-coaching, and other on-site strategies for ongoing professional development (for example, see box on this page).

These approaches are expensive when compared to other professional development strategies and require more work and planning. Thus, limited resources contributed somewhat to the lack of more ongoing staff development activities and long-range comprehensive plans in the schools we visited. Many schools were pressed for materials and other instructional resources that took precedence, and schools thus selected strategies that required fewer resources, such as altering schedules to provide teachers more time for planning.

RESTRUCTURING AND PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Located in an urban/suburban district, Westfield Middle School serves over 1,700 students. As in most other schools in the district, the student population is primarily Hispanic (91 percent) and many students are limited-English-proficient (LEP). In its efforts to expand the notion of their school as a community of learners, Westfield Middle School has just established a professional development school (PDS) to provide appropriate learning activities for school staff, parents, and students from a nearby university preparing for teaching and other child-serving professions. In a board-approved partnership with this university, the PDS will be housed on the Westfield campus and is expected to improve the quality of teacher education and provide continued professional growth for veteran teachers as well as support their restructuring effort.

From past experience with staff development activities, Westfield staff have found that one-shot mandatory training without any follow-up is ineffective for developing the interdisciplinary teaching teams they seek as part of their restructuring effort. "Teachers," the coordinator said, "like students, must be active participants not passive recipients, in the process; and ongoing, locally-supported staff development is key." Mentor teachers and veteran team members will provide team training over the summer and work with newly established teams in the beginning phases of implementing the interdisciplinary teaching model. In addition, Westfield and university staff will collaborate to offer courses for university credit in such areas as critical thinking, process writing, and LEP culture and methodology training.

University and Westfield staff will also co-teach the secondary teaching seminar for teaching credential candidates placed at their school. These candidates will become full members of an interdisciplinary team and participate in all campus meetings and activities as well as inservices. The PDS university coordinator works closely with Westfield's site staff development coordinator and school faculty. In addition to supervising fieldwork students assigned to Westfield, the university coordinator also visits classes, participates in team meetings, and assists in the preparation of grant proposals. The PDS university and school site coordinators anticipate that candidates from training programs in health, counseling, and other child-serving professions will also be included in the PDS in future years.

RESTRUCTURING THE COORDINATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Coordinating community resources in health and social services, the business community, and universities was a common component of restructuring in the schools we visited. Schools were also improving connections with the community through outreach to parents and community groups. Educators have come to recognize that in order for children to reach their highest potential, schools must attend to more than just their academic needs. The integration of education and social services has been found to be an effective approach to serving disadvantaged students and their families (e.g., Schorr, 1989).

Several of the schools we visited were also attempting to improve their coordination with the business community and institutions of higher education (IHEs). Relationships with business and industry and universities can yield both financial and in-kind assistance. The expertise lent by outside professionals, for example, can prove invaluable in upgrading curricula and the professional development of teachers.

Schools seeking closer relations with parents and the community avoided traditional parent activities that place the onus of involvement on parents. Instead they focused more on outreach services that are more comprehensive, addressing parent literacy and other educational needs.

A fourth way schools link with the community is to offer their facilities for recreational purposes and community events. In doing so, some schools established an image as neutral territory for troubled neighborhoods and families. Schools, especially in urban centers, are now trying to break down the alienation some parents may feel toward schools by making schools the recreational and cultural center of the community.

KEY FINDINGS

In general, we found schools eager to access and coordinate with community resources to support their restructuring efforts. In comparison to other restructuring goals, however, plans in this area were least developed. Once again, given the fiscal constraints under which most schools must now operate, it is not surprising that schools prioritized their restructuring efforts according to their traditional mission of providing high quality instruction and curriculum. To many schools, coordination activities would require time and resources which were already being spent on what were perceived to be more pressing needs.

- Some districts coordinated several social service agencies and schools, usually through a support services center housed on a school campus. Prior to restructuring, coordination activities with health and welfare agencies had occurred on an *ad hoc* and informal basis.

- Businesses were involved in the actual planning and operation of programs, rather than as mere financial contributors. This was most often seen at the secondary school level in school-to-work transition programs.

- Many schools worked with IHEs on remedial assistance programs and joint curricular and instructional projects. A few schools explored closer partnerships with IHEs for the professional development of teachers.

- Parent and community involvement shifted toward a more pro-active and comprehensive approach. Family literacy programs and community centers that could be used by neighborhood organizations and families were replacing traditional advisory council meetings.

Coordinating with Community Agencies

Research on interagency collaboration points to service delivery systems which are comprehensive, intensive, flexible, well-coordinated, and preventative (G.P. Guthrie & L.F. Guthrie, 1991). This typically means crossing traditional bureaucratic and professional boundaries to provide families with a continuum of services in a more accessible way. For example, a center located on school grounds might provide an array of brokerage or direct services so that parents are not left to navigate a confusing web of fragmented social services on their own.

Several schools we visited had ambitious plans to develop collaborative models for delivering services by linking health and social services to schools. California's Healthy Start initiative, SB620, which involves five major state agencies and a consortium of foundations in a statewide effort to move toward school-linked services, provided the incentive for development of these plans. In fact, many schools were busy developing proposals for the planning or operational grants offered by SB620.

Collaboration between schools, social services, and community agencies takes time and often requires new roles for staff and different ways of working with other organizations. When coupled with other ongoing restructuring initiatives, it's not surprising that many schools were only at the beginning stages of developing working relationships with community organizations and social service agencies. Thus, few schools were already coordinating services with other agencies in a significant way. Their efforts typically included one person – usually a community worker, parent liaison, or the school nurse – who conducted outreach and provided referrals to a small number of community based organizations for families on a case-by-case basis. There were exceptions, however. In some schools, coordination included more systemic and collaborative reforms that involved several organizations and people. In these cases, coordination with health, social service and community resources was often a district-wide or multi-school initiative. In one cluster of a high school, junior high schools, and feeder elementary schools, social services were provided through a support center located at the high school, giving students and their families access to immediate assistance (see box on page 24). The program worked to reduce absenteeism and transiency by focusing on stabilizing student and family needs.

In another district, a citywide strategic plan to provide comprehensive services was developed collaboratively by the major institutions in the city, including businesses and colleges. They formed a multi-agency coalition committed to finding long-range solutions for improving the conditions of children and families in the community and focused their efforts in four areas: childcare and preschool education, gangs and drug abuse prevention, school-based health services, and work force issues. As part of their plan, a mobile medical van with outstationed staff provided health care and education services for the five neediest elementary schools in the district.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Even before state-initiated restructuring efforts began, many schools had established ties with the business community, but these ties were largely financial rather than ongoing collaboration around projects. Historically, local businesses have provided monetary support and donations of goods such as ice cream, coupons for food, or passes to films and amusement parks as rewards or incentives for students participating in special or extra-curricular programs. At the secondary level, local businesses have sponsored athletic teams and other extra-curricular activities. The schools we visited, however, have begun to look to the business community for support of restructuring efforts, especially in regard to school-to-work transition and the introduction of technology into the classroom. Several secondary schools we visited planned to develop more integrated, ongoing relationships with the business community to provide students with hands-on learning experiences and broader exposure to a variety of career options. For example, one high school planned to engage juniors and seniors in off-campus activities for one quarter to pursue career interests directly in the community. Participating students would complete an individualized and vocationally-based project consisting of activities in their declared area of specialty, including activities such as job shadowing or an apprenticeship through part-time employment as well as community service. In the area of technology, schools have gone beyond one-time donations of equipment and established working partnerships with computer firms to explore the uses of technology within classrooms and schools.

RESTRUCTURING AND COORDINATING SOCIAL SERVICES

Located in a large urban district, Washington High School links students and their families to outside social services through a site-based center. Although at one time characterized as a "typical middle class high school," today Washington serves a highly diverse student population. Among the approximately 1,600 students enrolled, at least 37 different languages are represented. At the time of our visit, the school and community were frantically gearing up for the arrival of hundreds of Somalian refugees, some of whom would be enrolling at Washington High.

Many students come to Washington with a host of subsistence needs extending far beyond the instructional interventions provided in the classroom. To meet the medical, counseling, housing, clothing, job training, and other social service needs, the school established a coordination center on campus for students and their families. In a "one-stop shopping" approach, several services are available in a single location. Staff at the center provide referrals to outside agencies as well as assist in filling out applications for different public assistance programs. Medical services are provided on campus each Friday by a local university hospital. The center also operates an ongoing "clothes closet" for families. A needs assessment is conducted through a survey which parents are asked to complete when they first enroll a student. The program extends to other elementary and middle feeder schools, providing services to their parents as well, and eventually, the high school hopes to open satellite centers on the other campuses.

For the most part, we found that the impetus for more systemic changes in the relationships between schools and the business community came from district-wide initiatives. One district sponsored a conference and a series of retreats that brought together a broad spectrum of community leaders, including representatives from local businesses, community groups, unions, social service agencies, the district, and student body. The goal for this activity was to develop a strategic plan for the future of their community, with the restructuring of schools identified as one of the eight areas of focus.

Partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education

Secondary schools' relationships with institutions of higher education traditionally focus on recruiting and advising students, as well as the placement and supervision of student teachers. We also found schools working with universities and colleges in two major areas of restructuring: 1) remedial educational services; and 2) curricular and instructional projects. Several schools operated joint programs with nearby IHEs in which college students provided tutoring and homework assistance services for at-risk students. One elementary school worked collaboratively with a nearby university to provide homework and other assistance to "latchkey" students after school. Other schools worked with universities on specific curricular or instructional projects such as the California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP).

We found partnerships with IHEs to be a potentially valuable resource for the professional development of teachers. One of the partnerships described earlier linked an intermediate school and a nearby California State University (CSU) in establishing a professional development school. This project plans to build upon the notion of the schools as a community of learners by providing appropriate learning activities for staff, parents, student teachers, and other CSU candidates in child-serving professions such as health and counseling. The school and university are designing a program that would provide both beginning and veteran teachers as well as other CSU candidates with more opportunities for ongoing, on-site training and support. Classes for parents are also planned in areas such as English literacy and basic skills development, parenting education, and parent-child technology projects.

This type of collaboration, however, is not the norm. Many teachers may take courses from their local IHEs which relate to school curriculum and instruction restructuring effort, but few schools actually collaborate with an IHE to institutionalize an ongoing professional development program for their teachers.

Coordinating with Parents and Community Groups

Schools were eager to increase the levels of community and parent involvement, but few innovative strategies for restructuring such participation were found. The majority of schools we visited planned to expand participation in traditional areas such as extra-curricular activities, holidays, PTAs and booster clubs, and parent-teacher conference nights by providing additional incentives such as food or childcare to facilitate parental involvement in these activities. Similarly, roles in school decision-making were primarily limited to participation in school site councils and parent advisory councils. Most of these councils were a requirement of particular categorical programs and involved only a limited number of parents.

A less traditional way of involving parents was to provide adult education to parents. Some school staffs have come to believe that empowering parents is the most promising way to improve student learning in the long term. Several schools hoped to offer English language or literacy programs along with child-rearing classes, while other schools planned to offer job training and skill development services. In some cases, these activities focused on prevention and were extended to include parents with preschool-aged children.

One innovation was to target instructional programs to both parents and their children. Some schools implemented family math and science programs which are designed to actively

involve parents and their children in structured, hands-on activities. One pre-school aimed to involve parents early in their children's learning. Described as "parent and child education," the program was designed to give primarily Hispanic and limited-English speaking students the social and pre-school skills that they may not receive at home and required a weekly commitment of one hour from parents. Parent training focused on parenting and leadership skills and how to prepare their children for school. In addition, the program tried to utilize the talents of parents within the curriculum. For instance, parents also participated in activities that demonstrated to them how they could help their children develop reading and math skills in areas where the parents had expertise, such as gardening or sewing. In addition, parents helped teach folkloric dance and relate legends and stories of Mexico and Latin America to teachers who recorded them for use in the curriculum.

The creation of smaller "family" units appears to be having a positive impact on parent involvement. For instance, in one school where family structures had been in place for three years, teachers felt parents were more comfortable coming to the school and came more frequently because they knew teachers were usually available for conferences during a specific time of day (the common planning time). "Families" and the expanded student study teams also appeared to be changing parent conferencing practices by making them more meaningful. For example, during common preparation times, one team of teachers met with parents as a group to discuss a given student's problems. In this setting, staff and parents were better able to distinguish between isolated personality clashes with teachers and more pervasive behavior problems. Parent conferences took on a different tone, teachers said, because a parent can communicate with all of their child's teachers at one time and, thus, can better understand the nature and breadth of a particular problem. Similarly, some schools, especially elementary schools that expanded the SST process to include parents, reported parents were being involved in more meaningful discussions about the difficulties a student was having in a particular class.

Finally, some schools are trying to encourage the image of the school site as a community center. In small rural communities, the high school has traditionally served as a community center, providing recreational opportunities and resources to the community at large. We found schools in both urban and rural settings designing strategies to bring the community back into the schools. For instance, in one rural high school we visited, the school library is the heart of their distance learning and technology programs and is open most weeknights to the community as well as students. In an effort to combat growing violence in the surrounding neighborhood and promote community ownership, another school district and city jointly funded the renovation of an elementary school playground which now also serves as a city park. The principal of the school noted that the new adjoining park was filled with families in the evening, and vandalism of school property had declined since it opened. One of the most ambitious efforts was one elementary school's plan to build a multipurpose arts center for the school which could also serve the community in the evenings and on weekends.

Overarching and Emerging Issues

Overarching Issues Relating to Systemic Reform

Change as Episodic and Uneven

During the course of our examination, several overarching issues relating to systemic reform as a process were raised. In general, we found restructuring to be an episodic, uneven, and emerging process. The loss of funding, staff burn-out, and competing demands made it difficult to sustain restructuring activities. Change efforts in the areas of curriculum and instruction, governance, teacher development, and community coordination were all evolving at different rates and at different levels of intensity in each school. Some schools had several initiatives underway, but they were not always well-integrated. In fact, a key to the coherence of a school's restructuring was whether staff shared an underlying philosophy or vision. The extent to which different restructuring plans hung together and made sense depended on how they fit into a school's larger vision about how to affect the lives of students. This vision was also critical to building staff consensus around a framework in which to change norms and attitudes.

Change as Incremental

We also found the process of systemic change in schools to be incremental. Restructuring initiatives tended to build on successful prior practice rather than represent a complete overhaul. Many state and local initiatives in curriculum and instruction preceded the SB1274 and ESS initiatives by several years. It is not surprising, therefore, that restructuring efforts were farthest along in the areas of curriculum and instruction and the professional development of teachers. This is not to say that schools were only tinkering with existing practice. In fact, several schools had ambitious restructuring plans, including school governance and the coordination and use of community resources; however, most of these schools were still months, if not years, away from full implementation. For many involved in restructuring and anxious to reap the benefits of their efforts, the time needed to effect systemic change could be frustrating.

Change as Fundamental

Schools which made the most dramatic progress and sweeping reforms (as compared to their prior practices) typically had three opportunities for such a change. First, increasing demographic shifts in the concentration and background characteristics of at-risk students within schools and/or desegregation programs to achieve greater ethnic balance in a district forced several schools to look for new and better ways to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Second, schools often went the farthest in restructuring when school district policies encouraged more extensive reforms (such as shifting from Grade 7-9 junior high structures to Grade 6-8 middle school structures). Finally, the most ideal situation under which schools could restructure was when they could begin anew with a "clean slate," as when the district opened an additional school or combined two schools for district demographic and financial reasons.

EMERGING ISSUES

Our examination of the ESS schools is preliminary, and a thorough understanding will require further analysis. Several issues were raised, however, which have implications for continued research and may be important to monitor as trends in other restructuring initiatives as well.

Sub-Populations Especially At Risk

First, given the ESS's focus on ensuring academic success for <u>every</u> student, we asked whether any sub-populations of students appeared to be systematically excluded in restructuring efforts. While the integration of special education and Chapter 1 programs was certainly uneven across the schools we visited, those students did appear, for the most part, to be included in a school's overall plan for restructuring. This was not the case for programs serving LEP immigrant populations, however, who in several schools remained segregated from key restructuring activities. Services for LEP students were delivered in self-contained classrooms and, in some cases, did not include innovative curricular and instructional efforts such as integrated thematic instruction. When schools were divided into families, some LEP students were excluded, or in at least one case, made up a separate family. In general, LEP students in these situations do not benefit from any restructuring activities until they have mastered English at a level which allows them to be mainstreamed into the regular core curriculum. While there are some very practical reasons for their exclusion, this exclusion nevertheless runs counter to the principles of equity outlined in the ESS framework.

A related question is whether some restructuring efforts appear to be working against the best interests of these sub-populations. Heterogeneous grouping strategies which are not coupled with appropriate instructional strategies and adequate inservice training, for example, amount to a "sink-or-swim" approach and would presumably leave students less well off than they were. However, absent any longitudinal performance data on students, it is impossible to determine how well sub-populations of special needs children are really learning, given new grouping strategies or other restructured interventions.

We should point out that where LEP students represented the majority, restructuring initiatives not only included them, but were specifically designed to meet their needs. Grouping practices based upon English language development rather than age, for example, were introduced for the benefit of LEP students.

Differential Standards of Success

Another question is how to assess students in a way that is consistent with ESS's philosophy of promoting equal success for all students. Many schools have worked hard to develop an enriched curriculum and implement different grouping strategies to ensure equity and access. They have tried to set expectations and performance standards at uniformly high levels for all students. But along with this new set of higher aspirations, we found staff still struggling with how to assess, classify, and reward children for their work performance. For example, one middle school we visited had the goal of preparing all students for a college preparatory curriculum in high school. Yet the school also rewarded effort and growth, so that students could still receive a high grade by working hard, even though their performance did not meet these standards. Arguments for setting differential standards are based on the belief that rewarding hard work and progress is a way to

provide further motivation and build self-esteem. Staff at other schools argued that even though this practice is well-intentioned, it misleads the student and actually raises false expectations.

Conflicting Methods of Assessment

Many schools we visited are experimenting with alternative methods of assessing student performance, such as portfolios and performance-based assessments. It is unclear, however, how schools can reconcile these new approaches with the more traditional assessment systems still in place. Alternative assessment approaches are more consistent with the philosophy of ESS and its goals of teaching students a broad range of critical thinking skills and real world applications. Despite these bold moves to embrace what are now considered to be more "authentic" forms of assessment, staff fear their efforts will be penalized because their results are not readily comparable to the traditional standardized test scores used in other schools. Given the mobility rates of children enrolled in these ESS schools, there is warranted concern that their assessment results may be misinterpreted or their children misplaced when they enter a different school. Similarly, schools implementing these alternative forms of assessment are concerned about how these alternatives will interface with existing district and statewide testing systems, as well as college entrance requirements, and whether unfair comparisons might undermine their fledgling efforts.

These dilemmas point to the need for state and district policymakers to develop an accountability system which allows schools some level of experimentation and flexibility in the way a successful school is defined. Recognizing the need for a solution, a few districts have begun discussions about the need for locally-defined measures of success as well as district-wide measures to which all schools can be held.

The Dangers of Success

Finally, the consequences of a well-publicized innovation or early success emerged as an issue for several schools. A constant flow of visitors in one school reached as many as 1,500 in a two-year period. This not only disrupted the restructuring process, but also contributed to the teacher burnout associated with a fast-paced restructuring initiative. Some schools are weathering this onslaught better than others because they have designed procedures to control the visitation schedule and limit the number of visitors. Unless their safeguards are effective, the distractions will increasingly be an issue for schools that continue to win restructuring grants.

SUMMARY

RESTRUCTURING STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Most of the schools we observed still had a long way to go in carrying out their restructuring plans. They had made the most progress in the area of curriculum and instruction, largely due to other ongoing local and state reform initiatives in this area. Integrating concepts from various disciplines and organizing curriculum around broad themes are particularly popular strategies for restructuring the curriculum. Several schools were also actively involved in designing a curriculum that fosters critical thinking skills and integrates real world examples. At the same time, school staffs were struggling with how to give all students, regardless of prior school experience and skill level, equal access to the same enriched curriculum. Experimenting with grouping practices emerged as a popular tool in meeting this goal. However, as they implement heterogeneous grouping practices, teachers take on the added responsibility of accommodating more diverse sets of learning needs among their students. Few schools have provided an adequate level of inservice training or in-class support for teachers.

GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

Progress has also been made in the development of more decentralized decision-making structures. In the initial stages of restructuring, schoolwide decision-making structures were attempted as a way to include a wider array of school staff and community members in planning other organizational change activities. In addition, decision-making, especially in the area of curriculum and instruction, was further decentralized through the formation of sub-units or families. As members of families, teachers were given new responsibilities such as deciding which grouping practices to implement and how to schedule classes. However, less common was the actual transfer of authority from the principal to instructional staff on administrative, personnel, and budget issues. For these new decision-making structures to actually work, the support of traditional leaders (principals and district officials) had to be maintained. District mandates for new structures alone were ineffective strategies for restructuring.

PROFESSIONAL LIVES OF TEACHERS

Because of restructuring, the professional lives of teachers have become much more demanding. Not only are they expected to assume all the traditional roles associated with teaching but now must also be administrators, counselors, and social service brokers. In the past, inservice training for teachers has focused primarily on new instructional techniques and curriculum models. Yet relatively little has been done to train teachers in the skills associated with the new management and decision-making roles they are now assuming. While many school staff believe that professional development is needed to ensure a smooth transition during the restructuring process, limited funding has made it difficult to provide inservice training in a sustained and intensive manner. The drain restructuring causes on teachers' already limited time is an issue which has yet to be appropriately addressed.

Coordination of Community Resources

The least-developed area of restructuring is in the coordination of community resources. Recognizing that student learning is largely influenced by factors which extend beyond school walls, educators have begun to collaborate with their counterparts in the health and social service fields. They are also trying to link up with more resources in the business community and institutions of higher education.

Overarching and Emerging Issues

Even though the goal of restructuring was to bring about systemic change, most of the changes we observed were piecemeal and lacked coherence. In schools that had a clear vision or framework for restructuring, efforts were more likely to be well-integrated. Change was also incremental, causing frustration to some; but fundamental change in curriculum and instruction, governance, teacher development, and community resources is an arduous process which takes a significant amount of time. Fundamental changes were rare and typically occurred only when district demographics and policies resulted in opportunities to begin anew.

During the course of our examination, three critical issues emerged. First, for schools dealing with diverse and dynamic student populations, restructuring efforts appeared to exclude some populations, such as LEP students. Second, schools were adopting different standards for achievement and different methods for assessment. These practices may not only raise false expectations about students but also make it difficult to show the cumulative impact of restructuring across schools. Finally, the success of some schools distracted staff from their restructuring efforts. Despite such obstacles to restructuring, even at this initial stage, schools have already begun to find strategies to improve the learning experiences of large numbers of at-risk students.

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